DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 373 686 HE 027 682

AUTHOR Julian, Kerry E.; Peterson, Roger A.
TITLE "Will the US Take Mexico for Granted Too?": Pointers on Doing Business with Our New NAFTA Neighbor.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Eastern Michigan University Conference on Language and Communication for World Business and the Professions (13th, Ypsilanti, MI, April 14-16, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150 Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business; *Business Communication; *Cross Cultural Training; Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Differences; Economic Factors; Foreign Countries; Foreign Culture; International Communication; *International Trade
IDENTIFIERS *Mexico

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the conduct of United States-based businesses and their executives in foreign countries, and views Americans as ill-prepared to integrate their business with Mexican culture. The economic importance of Mexico is analyzed in view of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and expansion of Japanese and European companies in this area is noted. An overview of Mexican culture is then presented, to help American firms and their executives avoid problems and maximize their chances for success. It discusses the roles of men and women, the Mexican home, education, sports, family names, social invitations and their importance, humor, time, friendship and affection, the work week, individuality versus individualism, giving commands, nonverbal communication, when yes means no, and exchanging pleasantries. Anxieties about working with Mexico, such as government corruption and Mexico's precarious financial situation, are dispelled as obsolete. Seven recommendations are offered to American companies intending to enter the Mexican market. (Contains 15 references.) (JDD)

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ED 373 686

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Thirteenth Annual EMU Conference on Language and Communication for World Business and the Professions

April 14 - 16, 1994

Ypsilanti, Michigan

PAPERS ON INTERNATIONALIZING BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

"Will the US Take Mexico for Granted Too?": Pointers on Doing Business With Our New NAFTA Neighbor.

Kerry E. Julian

Motors Insurance Corporation

and

Roger A. Peterson

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"Will the US Take Mexico for Granted Too?": Pointers on Doing Business With Our New NAFTA Neighbor.

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Introduction

In the past a great deal of criticism has been leveled at the way United States based businesses and their executives conduct their affairs in foreign countries. Such conduct has resulted in what has come to be called the 'ugly American' stigma. Far too often in the past, people from the United States, conscious of the nation's status as a major world power have conducted themselves as if people from other countries should cater to their needs and have acted as if they were still at home in their native culture, regardless of the fact that they are actually abroad on foreign soil. This has resulted in lost business, failure to get repeat business or favorable references and strained relations when attempting to conduct business with other nations' companies. A case that sticks out sorely is the frequent failure of American businesses to adapt to Japanese culture when dealing in Japan or with that country's companies. An example of this is the statement by John Rehfeld, a manager in a Japanese-owned company, in an article for the Harvard Business Review stating, "I learned right away *what* they do. It took me a while to appreciate *why*" (November-December, 1990).

Will the U.S. do the same with our neighbor to the south, the emerging Latin American nation of Mexico? It would be nice to believe that since Mexico is so

close to us geographically that Americans are well attuned to the Mexican culture, and understand that there are differences in the way that every-day living and business dealings are conducted there. However, there exists strong evidence that such is not the case. Those who have already gone south say success isn't automatic. They point out that language and cultural barriers are a daily hurdle and that to succeed in business in Mexico requires that companies get to know and understand their customers (Vlasic, 1992). Mexicans will generally respond more positively if you attempt to speak to them in their language (Noble, Spitzer, & Wayne, 1989).

The Economic Importance of Mexico

Mexico has a population of approximately 84 million people and a consistently increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $170 billion in 1988 to an estimated $300 billion in 1992. While Germany, the U.S., and Japan crawl out of recession, Latin America has been growing in recent years at a healthy 3%-to-5% rate (Hollman, 1992). Mexico is now running a budget surplus (Baker and Weiner, 1992). Mexico's growth rate in Gross National Product (GNP) was 2.9% for the period 1965 to 1984. This is positive when compared to the U.S. growth rate in GNP of 1.7% for the same period (Fischer, Dornbusch, & Schmalensee, 1988).

Latin America's move to freer markets began with Chile in the 1970's, under

the rule of General Augusto Pinochet. But only when Mexico, with its civilian government, opened markets to freer competition in 1989 did the model become attractive. Today, the rest of Latin America is closely following Mexico's blueprint (Baker and Weiner, 1992).

An Example of Industry Potential

One of the authors works in the property and casualty business insurance industry which is in the mature stages in the U.S. The U.S. has recognized since 1985 that Mexico's protected insurance markets could benefit from liberalization, so the country was placed on a priority list for trade negotiations. Talks began in 1987. In 1989, minority ownership by U.S. insurers was allowed, and six companies took advantage of that provision. A year later President Bush and Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari decided to create a free trade agreement, the final details of which took two years to hammer out before the final deal, the recently enacted North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA was finally accepted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

In 1989, Mexico had an insurance market the size of Arkansas - about $3.5 billion in premiums. Considering the population of Mexico, many believe the market should be much larger. Of course the culture, laws and needs of the population

differ, but per-capita premium sold was $30 in 1989, compared with $1,800 in the U.S. If Mexico follows in Spain's tracks, U.S. insurers are looking at a market that could increase twelve-fold in the next decade or two. Mexico has the potential to become the sixth or seventh largest insurance market in the world (Pullen, 1992).

This example is cited only as an illustration of how attractive certain sectors of the Mexican economy could be to U.S. businesses. For any company looking to enter the Mexican market the question of course is *how* to do it. In the material to follow we will attempt to give a broad overview of the current situation in Mexico and some guidance in how to go about doing business there.

The Problem of Staying With the Status Quo

Businesses in this country will be limiting their opportunities and their chances for success if they choose to ignore the need for "cultural education." As Baker and Weiner (1992) point out in their article, "...with the world dividing into regional blocs, the U.S. is looking south for strategic allies. Latin America with a booming population of nearly 400 million, represents its fasted-growing export market and brightest prospect for growth in the '90s" (p 52).

Japanese and European companies aren't exactly sitting out the boom in Mexico and Latin America. Chile's largest trading partner is Japan. European operations

such as Siemens, Nestle, Rhone-Poulenc and others are revamping their plans for Latin operations to take into consideration more open borders (Baker & Weiner, 1992).

On the plus side, the once popular theme in Mexico of '*Yankee* go home' may now be giving way to a more pro-American sentiment because of a desire to avail itself of our technology and money. This should not be taken to mean that Mexico wishes to engage in unquestioning, slavish copying of the American way of doing things. It is true that Mexican culture has often been created by mixing indigenous ways and ways borrowed from other societies (Ramos, 1963). However, we would be sadly mistaken to adopt a policy of attempting to bring and impose "our way" of doing business on this vital and dynamic country. While the Mexicans may engage in a degree of imitation, in the end a sense of national pride returns (pp. 101-109).

Another influential factor is the existence in Mexico of the "Mestizos", who are persons of mixed Indian-Spanish descent. The Mestizos are the dominant ethnic group. The monolingual Indians, such as the Maya and the Nahuatl, constitute 7-10% of the population and speak several dozen different languages. Indians retain a largely aboriginal material culture of religion, medical practices and social structures, whereas the Mestizo culture favors a modified Hispanic tradition. Roman Catholics constitute over 90% of the population (Weil, 1975). Despite the recent

problems of Indian uprisings in the south of the country the unique blending of the Mestizo, Indian and religious cultures help to bind Mexico together in nationalism.

An Overview of Mexican Culture

American firms and their executives need to know and understand Mexican culture and practices in order to avoid problems and maximize the chances for success. The following is a survey of informed observations about Mexico, its culture and its people along with some comments about certain long held and erroneous views of that same culture. It is by no means intended to be all-inclusive but is intended as a guide to help readers understand the need to study Mexico, its people and their culture.

Roles of Men and Women

Traditionally, Mexican men were expected to be virile and self confident. In addition, men were expected to speak well in public , withstand pain and be daring. If a man possessed these virtues he was considered "macho", which has become a popular term (or in some cases unpopular) in English. Women on the other hand were expected to be gentle, passive, dependent and subservient to males.

These ideals while still present are weakening as women seek employment,

gain access to education and the professions and become involved in women's rights activities. Thus, while male 'machismo' and passive roles for women still exist in Mexico, domestic chores, wage earning and family planning are becoming shared responsibilities in contemporary Mexican society (Foreign Service Institute [FSI], 1970 and Ramos, 1963).

The Mexican Home

In Mexico, while the outward appearances of homes are very similar to those seen in the United States and other parts of the world there are some important ways in which "living in the home" differ. As in the United States the living room is used for socializing, receiving guests and so forth. But unlike this country the television set is often located in the parent's bedroom, where members of the family and intimate friends congregate to watch their favorite programs and socialize.

Another major difference is that privacy in many Mexican homes is not a very important consideration. Family members frequently visit one another's room, talk while reading, and continue conversations at the dinner table or while watching a soap opera on television. In this regard, concerns for individual privacy frequently give way to family togetherness.

Meals in Mexican society incorporate great variety and it would be

impossible to list all of the many preferences. However, the main meal of the day is usually served between noon and two in the afternoon. It is generally quite substantial and provides family members with enough energy to work rather late, until six or seven o'clock in the evening. Anywhere between 7:00 p. m. and 10:00 p. m. another meal is served. In comparison to the main meal of the day, it is somewhat small (FSI, 1970).

Education

Primary school begins in kindergarten and ends in grade six. Secondary education begins in "first course" or seventh grade and continues on through "sixth course." Most secondary students study a wider variety of subjects than do their counterparts in American schools. In a typical semester a student may have as many as ten different subjects, ranging from world literature and foreign language to mathematics, psychology, philosophy and anthropology.

Although more and more public schools are being constructed in Mexico, most middle and upper class families prefer to send their children to private institutions. In addition primary and secondary school students frequently wear uniforms in both private and public schools.

Being well-educated in Mexico is considered a positive asset. It implies an ability to discuss a wide range of topics intelligently, familiarity with philosophical and literary movements and being generally well-informed. Even high school students take pride in being able discuss a wide range of topics.

Another attribute closely related to one's educational level and which is highly valued in Mexico is that of being well-mannered and able to display socially acceptable customs (FSI, 1970).

Sports

The most popular sport in Mexico is football or what we in the United States refer to as soccer. Play is prevalent at both the professional and amateur levels. Baseball is also popular in Mexico. Basketball, volleyball, tennis, jai alai, swimming and fishing have also achieved a great deal of popularity in recent years. American style football is also a favorite pastime for a growing number of Mexicans. Bullfighting has enjoyed a modicum of success in Mexico. Many of Spain's most famous bullfighters visit Mexico during the country's bullfighting season. Most organized sports activities in Mexico take place in clubs. These groups compete with each other for the best players. Some teams field three or more sports

simultaneously. Prestige of course is attached to the club that wins a championship (FSI, 1970).

Family Names

The use of family names in Mexico is quite different from the way surnames are used in the U.S. In most areas of Mexico people have two last names. For example if you were introduced to Pedro Suarez Franco you would know that the surname Suarez was that of his father and Franco was the last name of his mother. The last name of the mother is never used in isolation. In situations where the full name is not used for identification purposes only the father's last name is used. For example, our Pedro would be referred to as Senor Suarez under these conditions.

When a woman marries, she keeps her father's last name but substitutes the name of her husband for that of her mother. As an example if Pedro's wife had been named Maria Gonzales Garcia before marriage, she became Maria Gonzales Suarez when she married Pedro Suarez Franco. By using two last names Mexicans are able to retain a formal identity with more than one family (FSI, 1970).

Social Invitations and Their Importance

"I invite you" or "Yo te invito" is a common invitation to join Mexicans for

a drink or meal and indicates that the one extending the invitation will pay for the expenses. Any attempt made by the invitee to pay will probably be rejected. In addition, it is usually considered an honor to be able to invite someone. A more suitable translation for the invitation may be "this one's on me." In any case the invitation should be accepted since it is almost always sincere.

These invitations play a crucial role in conducting business in Mexico. It is during these sessions at a cafe or restaurant that a great deal of business is accomplished in Mexico. They are commonplace when the people are involved or planning to be involved in transacting business with one another. Lunch is probably the most important method of gaining personal contact. These sessions can last as long as two or three hours and are interwoven with casual conversations about the family, friends, politics, philosophy, and life in general. In fact, purely business matters are frequently not discussed at all on such occasions. In many cases it is the casual conversation and personal bonds that develop that make signing a business contract a reality (Barnstone, 1993).

Many North Americans find this Hispanic way of doing business uncomfortable at first and sometimes offend their Spanish speaking counterpart by hurrying through a meal or sales pitch. Courtesy and conversation however, are important ingredients in many different kinds of transactions in Mexico (FSI, 1970).

Humor

Humor is as important to Mexicans as it is in any other culture. Telling jokes is an art form in this country. The best joke tellers enjoy a great deal of popularity. Common targets of jokes are the government, industrial leaders, public personalities and social issues. A pun about the president and attacks on the inefficiency of a certain agency could initiate an hour or two of laughter. Many Spanish jokes are plays on words which cause innocent confusion to those unfamiliar with the Spanish language and Mexican culture (FSI, 1970).

Time

A common and most often mistaken impression about Mexicans, is that they have little respect for time. They have been portrayed as people who are always late for important activities and references have often been made regarding their failures to respect strict schedules. Unfortunately, these generalizations are not accurate and interfere with accurate communications. In point of fact, Mexicans are as punctual as their German and North American counterparts when it concerns arriving at work or school on time. Business appointments may, as in many non-Hispanic countries, begin a few minutes later than the designated hour. However, serious violation of scheduled meeting times is considered to be in bad taste (FSI, 1970).

There is a serious difference in attitudes towards commitments and intentions which often results in the view that Mexicans don't care about time. To quote Marc Erlich, a psychologist based in Mexico City;

> The American executive agrees to do something it becomes a matter of personal honor and integrity to fulfill that commitment. The job must be done and the ability to meet deadlines is a sign of responsibility, professional skills and personal worth. To many Mexicans, a commitment is more of an intention to do something than a firm decision. A committment is a statement of a desirable outcome, not a promise to fulfill an agreed-upon arrangement. Planning and deadlines are viewed as useful, but few expect plans and goals to be taken literally (Erlich, p. 18).

To the American it appears that the Mexican cares little about time and lacks committment, to the Mexican it appears that the American is rigid, unbending and has an unrealistic perception of time. Mexicans have a multi-level perception of time. Their conception that plans are not likely to proceed logically and exactly as scheduled allow them to handle problems and interruptions without stress.

Where Americans may encounter a major problem with time is at social events. Parties, weddings and other such activities may often begin an hour or two after the time announced, with a prompt arrival posing embarrassment for guest and host alike. When in doubt, you should ask which "concept" of time is being used. Are you expected to be prompt, fashionably late or whenever convenient?

Another often erroneous stereotype of Mexicans is that they frequently put

off until tomorrow what might be done today. This tomorrow spirit ("Mañana"), however, is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of Mexican life. Mexicans, like North Americans and Europeans, are very much concerned with terminating projects on schedule and as timely as possible (FSI, 1970).

Friendship and Affection

The hug or "abrazo" is a means by which Hispanic friends and members of the family, especially men, show affection for one another. An embrace is frequently extended to one's close acquaintances and business associates and is accompanied by a great deal of back slapping. However, it must be done properly. This is done by holding your head erect, warmly patting the other man on the back with both hands and concluding by shaking hands (Barnstone, 1993). Women on the other hand, express their affection toward one another with a kiss on the cheek.

Although men and women may also embrace one another, especially in family situations, it is more likely that they will shake hands. The use of the hug or embrace is closely associated with friendship. Gaining friends is an art much practiced and highly valued in Mexico and the relationships that develop serve as sources of information and personal identity. In a way, friends represent a measure of success in life.

Friendship in Mexico implies a willingness to help in time of need, provides social services, and intercedes in official matters. Friends are often granted the status of family member, in particular when they become a godfather or godmother to ones children. One of the most important qualities of friendship in Mexico is sincerity. The true friend is one who is honest, can be relied on in the full sense of the word, says what he or she really means and does not pretend to be something he or she is not. The opposite extreme is to be viewed as being hypocritical. This term is considered to be extremely negative and friendship is usually denied to people who are judged to be overly hypocritical (FSI, 1970).

This issue cannot be stressed enough, as business dealings may well succeed or fail based upon a person's ability to "make friends" and develop trusting relationships. For example, while it is common practice in the United States to have one's attorney present during negotiations this is taken as a sign of mistrust in Mexico where they believe business deals require a great deal of flexibility (Barnstone, 1993).

Work Week

The normal work week in Mexico is slightly longer than that observed in the United States and many European countries. It frequently lasts between 44 and 50

hours leaving the worker less leisure time than in many other parts of the world. However, the business day in Mexico is not deemed to be one of all work and no play. Time is taken to enjoy pleasantries and light humor during the course of working hours. Mexican attitudes towards work are often characterized by a popular saying, "I work to live, I don't live to work". Although Mexicans are hard workers , many view the money that results as a means to procure life's necessities, not as an end in itself.

Finally, manual labor which has not been held in high esteem, is gaining respect as Mexico attains higher levels of technological development. The popular professions of law and medicine are giving way to careers in engineering and science (FSI 1970, Section 3).

Individuality vs. Individualism

This is an area which poses a great potential for misunderstanding between Americans and Mexicans. "Mexicans believe in what could be defined roughly as the 'soul.' Each person is basically good and decent; one's dignity is unaffected by behavior. Mexicans tend to accept the inherent worth of friends and colleagues without demanding specific performance or achievement" (Erlich, 1993). In contrast, the American believes that one demonstrates integrity or dignity through actions.

Thus, to the Mexican the U.S. system misses the point because it reduces people's value to an impersonal standard and reflects an arrogantly superficial approach towards others. On the other hand the uniformed U.S. executive views the Mexican indifference to the goal of ever increasing achievement as laziness or lack of ambition. To instill the value of hard work in their Mexican staffs, some U.S. executives have become stern disciplinarians whose methods served only to promote resentment and resulted in increasingly more subtler forms of resistance (Erlich, 1993).

Closely related is the difference between American and Mexican attitudes towards following rules. The American has been brought up to believe that all people are created equal and that no one should look for any special favors or exemptions from rules, that is, "no one is above the law." Mexicans on the other hand take the view that rules, policies and procedures should sometimes be overlooked or bypassed in order to satisfy other people's needs or wishes. To them, the American's insistence on playing by the rules is often received with amused, polite disregard and is sometimes taken as evidence that the boss just does not know what he/she is doing (Erlich, 1993).

Giving Commands

This is another particularly sensitive area and one where it is very easy to give offense. Many command forms in Spanish are quite similar to those of English, *e.g.* "speak," "be quiet," "come," and "wait." It is commonly accepted in our society that their effect is considerably softened by coupling them with the word "please." However, in Mexican society even when these commands are coupled with please, they may still be viewed as being slightly abrupt. Spanish speaking societies have developed various ways of softening the impact of telling someone to do something. Two popular ways used to reduce the directness of a command involve using the expressions, "do me the favor of" or "have the kindness to". For example, when asking someone to sign a document you would use the phrases, "please sign", or "hagame el favor de escribir" which literally means "do me the favor of signing". These expressions for issuing commands reduce the harshness often associated with telling people what to do and help interpersonal communication in Spanish to flow more smoothly (FSI, 1970).

The Role of Non-Verbal Communication.

In most two way conversations it is very probable that Mexicans will stand physically closer to one another than Americans would. In addition, they will probably touch one another regardless of sex, more frequently than Americans.

Many Americans find Hispanic customs regarding distance and touching to be uncomfortable at first. They view physical closeness and contact as inappropriate intimacy. On the other hand, natives of the Hispanic culture frequently characterize the person who backs away from this contact as aloof and cold. As a business representative you will probably find that effectiveness in communicating will improve if you are able to reduce the space between yourself and those with whom you interact.

Mexicans shake hands more frequently than Americans. Even the most casual of encounters in Mexico begin and end with a hand shake, regardless of the age and sex of the people involved.

There are also some unfamiliar non-verbal gestures that Americans need to get used to. A frequently used method for pointing is one in which the lips are puckered towards the object being referred to, accompanied by a slight raising of the head. Saying no can be expressed non-verbally simply by extending the right index finger and moving it in a back and forth fashion. If you wish to call someone's attention to an object or another person, simply use the index finger to pull down the skin immediately below the right eye. Finally "come here", in Mexico, is indicated by waving the right hand, palm facing the ground in a downward fashion (FSI, 1970).

The U.S. business person should be aware of and sensitive to this and other

"body language" that occurs which may point to real meanings often quite different from what is being "said" on the content or report level (Brimm, 1992).

When Yes Means No

The Japanese and the Mexicans share a common trait in that in both societies it is considered to be impolite to say no. Therefore they make every attempt to avoid doing so. There is the same concern with saving face as there is in Oriental societies. In addition, to many Mexicans the messenger and the bad news are the same so there is also a desire to withhold bad or unwelcome information so as to avoid being blamed for it (Erlich, 1993). As a result you have to be extremely sensitive to their actions and not just their words. They will often just say yes to avoid giving offense. Therefore you have to develop an instinct for sensing when negotiations are going nowhere and that it is time to move on (Barnstone, 1993).

Exchanging Pleasantries

It is considered polite to initiate conversations with acquaintances or friends by exchanging pleasantries. So before getting down to business at a meeting or even a casual encounter, ask about the well being of the people you are talking to, their family and mutual friends. A person who neglects to express concern for the welfare

of others is often considered to be unnecessarily direct or impolite.

There are many ways of asking "how are you" in Mexico. "Como esta usted" or "how are you"' or "como leva" (how's it going) are used with people who are significantly older than you, strangers, adults with whom you have only a superficial acquaintance, and persons with whom you have had only formal contacts (e.g. doctors, lawyers, etc.). "Como esta es tu" also meaning "how are you" and "como teva" are used to inquire about the well-being of children, people with whom you are intimate and peers with whom you have shared a degree of informality.

Appropriate responses for questions about your general health or well-being include "bien" (fine), "muy bien" (very fine), "bastante bien" (fairly fine), "mal' (sick or bad), and "asi asi" (fair). "Asi" is usually accompanied by rotating the hand to the left and right. This hand motion is sometimes an appropriate response alone (FSI, 1970).

Conclusions

Mexico is North America's greatest opportunity for regional development and economic growth. Just as Western Europe has drawn together, Canada, Mexico and the United States have been working tc open up their common borders, beginning with the Canada-United States Autopact in 1967, the Canada-United States Free

Trade Agreement in 1988 and culminating in the recent NAFTA agreement. Meanwhile, much like Eastern Europe, Mexico has recently begun to emerge from decades of state intervention, antagonism toward its neighbors, and resistance to foreign investment. The revolution going on there is not as visible as in Eastern Europe, but it is almost as profound (Sanderson and Hayes, 1990).

Mexico is becoming an increasingly literate society with motivated people who are seeking the same living standards and individual opportunities as the newly democratized Poles and Czechs. The major impediment to closer ties, in fact, lies not in Mexico, but in the U.S.'s response to Mexico's struggle to improve its standard of living. Where the nations of Western Europe have either welcomed Eastern European refugees with open arms or sought a long-term solution to their plight, the U.S. has erected something like a Berlin Wall to ward off Mexicans (Sanderson, 1990).

In summary, Americans are ill-prepared to integrate their business with Mexican culture. Although there is some evidence of progress in joint ventures, it is small in comparison to the whole. One such success comes from FAMA, a subsidiary of the Mexican based company Vitro Corporation, which established cooperative relations with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Texas and Monterey University in Mexico (Sanderson, 1990). Even this project

was initiated by the Mexican company.

Obsolete Anxieties

Sanderson and Hayes discuss the fact that far too many continually bring up the stereotypes citing Mexico's precarious financial situation, monstrous debt load, and inflation, as well as the cultural implications of resentment to "Yanqui" investment and the "Mañana" work ethic (Sanderson, 1990). They go on to point out that "all of these stereotypes have to be reexamined. Mexico's problems -- and there are many -- are steadily, even dramatically , improving" (Rhodes, 1992). The complaints most commonly leveled against the country are substantially less justified than they were only a few years ago. As a matter of fact, these are the precise issues that are more appropriate for Eastern Europe (Sanderson, 1990).

No one disputes that Mexico's bureaucracy can be maddeningly frustrating but the use of the "Mordida" is now obsolete. Mexico has undertaken a massive house cleaning in regard to government corruption. In 1990 President Carlos Salinas de Gortari fired all of the customs inspectors and replaced them with new, young professionals. "Never offer a bribe or agree to pay one even if asked, or you may run afoul of the law of two countries" (Barnstone, 1993).

An example of Mexico's commitment to joining the modern world, is that it has instituted its own version of Japan's prestigious "Deming Award" (on which the U.S. Baldrige Award is modeled) for outstanding achievements in quality, customer responsiveness and quality of work life. Companies that enter this competition must explicitly compare their quality improvements with those of other companies producing similar goods and services, whether in Mexico or abroad (Sanderson, 1990).

Recommendations

American companies intending to enter the Mexican market should plan to spend quality time educating their staff about the culture and the ways of doing business there. The material set out in this document is intended only as the foundations for building a cultural bridge to Mexico.

While appropriate recommendations for action are numerous we would like to set out some of the more important ones:

1. Study and learn the culture beforehand, making use of all available aids such as publications, consultants, governmental agencies in Mexico and the United States, etc.
2. A study of the country's history is also highly recommended. Mexicans

have a strong sense of national pride and a knowledge of their history by outsiders is viewed as a sign of interest and empathy.

3. Be an active and interested observer. Listen! Much of culture can only be learned via observation. Look for cues and insights into nuances by observing what and how people in Mexico do things. Base your actions and reactions upon what you have seen and heard.
4. Have everyone who is going to deal with Mexican people learn some Spanish. Even a limited capacity to speak their language will, if sincere, be warmly received. Personnel who are going to be involved in continuing relationships with the Mexican people should learn the basics of the Spanish language. Because while many business people in Mexico are bilingual the same is not true of lower ranking clerical staffs and routine phone calls are going to require the use of Spanish (Barnstone. p. 72). Finally, always have available your own fully fluent translator when negotiating critical issues.
5. Personnel and their families sent on long term assignments to Mexico should receive intensive training on Mexico and it's culture before and after arrival.
6. Never forget that business in Mexico operates on personal relationships

and personal visits. This partially due to cultural reasons but it is also caused by the fact that communications networks are not as developed as in the United States. Long-distance phone calls are very expensive, few companies have rotary phone lines (one number with several extensions that can be used at the same time), fax machines are not in wide-spread use yet and mail is a "black hole" (Barnstone, p. 72). In consequence, personal visits are viewed as extremely important.

7. Above all, everyone involved must be made to understand that affairs in Mexico should be conducted within the business and governmental framework of Mexico. In particular, they must come to know and understand the role of friendship and its ramifications.

The recommendations above will be necessities for those planning to "go south" to do business. While learning Mexican culture is certainly a need for U.S. business, the American people just might have fun in the process.

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